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Information received from the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

Summary

The collaboration of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) with indigenous peoples must be considered in relation to the organization's mandate and general approach. FAO currently stresses its evolving role as a "knowledge organization" — commitment that goes beyond the dissemination of data, methodologies and statistics and it includes the task of fostering dialogue and sharing experiences and best practice. Collaboration with and learning from indigenous peoples, who make their living from the natural environment and thus generally possess a profound knowledge of its significance and potential benefits, is of great importance for FAO. Given this awareness, the theme for the seventh session of the Permanent Forum is crucial for FAO, an organization committed to deepening its cooperation with indigenous communities and their organizations in support of their efforts to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change, just as it is eager to learn from the unique experiences and traditional knowledge of such communities.

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The activities of FAO in relation to the special theme for the seventh session of the Permanent Forum: "Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges", are presented in the organization's contribution to an inter-agency paper on climate change and indigenous peoples, to be submitted to the Permanent Forum at its seventh session.

During its sixth session, the Permanent Forum encouraged FAO to promote programmes facilitating the improvement of the capacity of indigenous families and communities to understand financial management in order to support decision-making about positive health choices. FAO interprets this recommendation as falling within the realm of its mandate relating to nutrition and livelihoods. Activities during 2007 in connection with the nutrition and livelihoods of indigenous peoples included:

- A programme supported by FAO and based at the Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.
- A series of studies carried out under the FAO Livelihood Support Programme on the theme "Understanding how access to seeds contributes to rural livelihoods".
- The publication of a comprehensive training package, *Building on gender, agrobiodiversity and local knowledge: a training manual*, directed at trainers and other professionals with a view to facilitating their exploration and development of linkages between local knowledge systems, gender roles, food provision and the conservation and management of agro-biodiversity.

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I. Nutrition and livelihoods

Indigenous peoples' food systems: the many dimensions of culture, diversity, environment, nutrition and health

1. The dimensions of nature and culture that define indigenous peoples' food systems contribute to the holistic health of individuals and their communities when it comes to not only physical health, but also the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of health, healing and protection from disease. Paradoxically, despite their wealth of knowledge, indigenous peoples are often vulnerable within societies as a result of extreme poverty, discrimination and marginalization, and thus their access to resources becomes limited, leading, unnecessarily, to poor health outcomes.

2. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), together with other partners in development, has supported the implementation of 12 case studies around the world organized by the Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment at McGill University, Montreal, Canada.[1] Leaders of communities of indigenous peoples and academic partners have collaborated in the documentation of indigenous food systems and participated in the implementation of health-promotion interventions, using culturally sensitive and environmentally relevant elements found in local food systems. A forthcoming publication will describe the first phase of the research programme and provide examples of nutrition transitions in indigenous communities, presenting evidence that local resources are critical for food security, nutrition and health.[2]

Understanding how access to seeds contributes to rural livelihoods

3. Agricultural policies and the incentive structures they create have a major impact on the conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Activities in the area of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture involve several stakeholders, including public and private institutions, companies, non-governmental organizations and, not least, communities and individuals. Nevertheless, the needs of smallholder or indigenous farmers are often not considered in national seed programmes and policies. The importance of access to local seeds by indigenous rural communities, in terms of not only food security but also cultural beliefs, practices and rituals, tends to be underestimated.

4. Several studies have been carried out in eastern Africa to improve understanding of the factors affecting access to seeds in rural livelihoods. Similar studies have also been carried out in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The studies were carried out under the FAO Livelihood Support Programme on the theme "Understanding how access to seeds contributes to rural livelihoods". The report on the Lao People's Democratic Republic has been published as part of the

[1] See http://www.mcgill.ca/cine.

[2] One of the studies under this initiative addresses the problem of diabetes and related non-communicable diseases highlighted in the Permanent Forum's call for assistance. See Kuhnlein et al. (2006), "Indigenous peoples' food systems for health: finding interventions that work", *Public Health Nutrition* 9(8):1013-1019.

Programme's publication series; the Kenya-based report will be published later this year.[3]

5. The main objective of the studies was to strengthen access to seeds and plant genetic resources to increase the food security of rural and/or indigenous communities. If such access is to be strengthened, it is necessary to know the weaknesses from a community-based perspective, embedded within cultural systems that have been tested over time. The studies provide several examples of socially defined and gender-defined practices and taxonomy.

Building on gender, agro-biodiversity and local knowledge

6. The FAO project entitled "Gender, biodiversity and local knowledge systems for food security (Links)" (2002-2005), was an example of a holistic approach intended to develop linkages between local knowledge systems, gender roles and relationships, food provision and the conservation and management of agro-biodiversity and provide insights that might benefit indigenous communities. The project, a southern African regional effort, sought to help development practitioners to recognize that farmers have knowledge, practices and skills that are often highly sustainable and respectful of the natural ecosystems that they depend on for their food and livelihoods.

7. On the basis of experience gained from that project, FAO developed a comprehensive training package, entitled *Building on gender, agro-biodiversity and local knowledge: a training manual*. The Manual is intended to be used as a conceptual guide for trainers and to provide resource material for participants in training courses directed at researchers and extension workers as well as reference material for anyone working within the context of agro-biodiversity management, gender and local knowledge.

II. Communication for development

Promotion of community participation in rural radio programming

8. FAO has more than 30 years of experience in the field of communications in support of agriculture and rural development. In 1969, the organization became a pioneer in the United Nations system when it established a Development Support Communication Branch, later transformed into the Communication for Development Group, which currently manages about 50 projects, in collaboration with Governments, United Nations agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations.

9. FAO has been a leader in promoting community participation in rural radio programming and is now facilitating links with new information and communications technologies, consciously producing services with audience

[3] *Access to seeds and plant genetic resources for food and agriculture: their role in improving livelihoods in the Lao People's Democratic Republic* will be available at http://www.livelihoods.org/lessons/project_summaries/supp4_projsum.html.

participation in local languages, while taking into account local cultures. Efforts are also being made to enhance the use of traditional and folk media that form an integral part of rural life, such as proverbs, poems, songs, dances, plays and stories. Traditional media offer an effective means of integrating local agricultural knowledge with new scientific knowledge from outside sources. At the same time, new media can be appropriated and managed locally by indigenous people for their own purposes.

World Congress on Communication for Development

10. The commitment to communication and development of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations was demonstrated by the first World Congress on Communication for Development, jointly organized by FAO, the World Bank and the Communication Initiative Network and held at FAO headquarters in Rome in October 2006. The focus of the Congress was to promote the mainstreaming of communications into development policies and programmes, establish strategic partnerships and demonstrate that communication for development is essential for meeting today's most pressing development challenges.

11. In connection with the Congress, FAO implemented a series of regional studies, consultations and workshops to elicit the views and proposals of local practitioners and institutions with a view to mainstreaming communications into policies related to sustainable development. Several of those activities highlighted the importance of establishing links and collaborating with indigenous communities and organizations, not least when it comes to supporting indigenous languages and their use for transmitting information and experiences related to issues of importance for sustaining livelihoods and supporting development.

12. In 2007, a book entitled *World Congress on Communication for Development: Lessons, Challenges, and the Way Forward*[4] was published, recounting experiences and findings from the various sessions of the Congress and emphasizing the importance of communication for sustainable project design.

13. That comprehensive publication also highlights the fact that the right to communications for self-determined development must be guaranteed, in particular to indigenous peoples. It is essential to promote policies, mechanisms and initiatives that guarantee and enhance the realization of indigenous peoples' access to, and use of, various means of communication, particularly in view of their invisibility in and marginalization from development processes and their significant contributions to the diversity of humankind.

14. By the end of 2008, mechanisms for participation, consultation, collaboration and sharing of experiences between indigenous peoples in communication for development will have been established in at least two regions. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and related reports, managed by indigenous peoples' organizations in collaboration with the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, will have been established in at least 10 countries. FAO is currently actively collaborating in this effort.

[4] See http://www.fao.org/nr/com/abst/com_071001_en.htm.

Collaboration with Guaraní communities in Bolivia

15. One example of the communications strategies of FAO can be seen in its ongoing collaboration with Guaraní communities in Bolivia, with which the organization's Communication Department is developing an alternative communication model, combining several media and communications systems (audio-visual, press, radio and the like), with a view to ensuring that the emerging model will be useful for the Guaraní people and that the system will be managed entirely by them. A number of experiences are described in a publication entitled *Yasarekomo*, the Guaraní word for "to awaken", which also refers to an awakening of consciousness and a new way of thinking that responds to the challenges which face us in today's world. The initiative has (a) identified key topics and experiences about the best communication methods and strategies applicable for the promotion of sustainable livelihoods; (b) systematized methodologies and tools for communications strategy design and service delivery for sustainable rural livelihoods to be used at various levels; and (c) facilitated information exchange and collaboration on the topic between development projects, institutions, organizations and communication centres and non-governmental organizations through existing networks and communities of practice, promoting a regional platform and a plan of action.

16. The experiment serves as inspiration for other regional communication platforms already established in Central America and the Near East. A new platform for indigenous peoples' communication and sustainable livelihood (established on the basis of an initiative by the International Forum on Indigenous Peoples' Communication and Development, held in Bolivia in September 2006) is currently supported by FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Confederation of Indigenous People of Bolivia and the Permanent Forum.

III. Cultural indicators

17. Indigenous peoples are urgently calling for recognition of the vital and fundamental importance of culture for the viability of their traditional food and agro-ecological systems, as well as for sustainable development. Culture should be considered a fourth pillar of sustainable development, additional to the social, economic and environmental pillars. Culture encompasses the shared beliefs, values, traditions, customs, knowledge and ceremonies that people transmit across generations and use to define and sustain their collective identities and relationships with each other and the world. Traditional cultural practices and food systems are positively related and mutually supportive, and both are fundamental for food security and well-being.[5]

18. Working in partnership with indigenous peoples' organizations, FAO has identified cultural indicators of indigenous peoples' food and agro-ecological systems. The indicators and survey methods were discussed and established during a global consultation on the right to food, coordinated by the International Indian Treaty Council and held in Nicaragua in 2006. A technical paper is currently being

[5] For information about the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development initiative of FAO and indigenous culture, see http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/964/2687/2453/index.html.

finalized. Agreement was reached during the consultation in Nicaragua on the following indicator categories:

(a) Access to land, territories, natural resources, sacred sites and ceremonial areas;

(b) Abundance or scarcity of, and threats to, traditional seeds, plant foods and medicines and food animals, and their associated production practices;

(c) Use and transmission of knowledge, methods, language, ceremonies, dances, prayers and oral histories related to traditional foods and agro-food systems, and the continued use of traditional foods in daily diets;

(d) Capacity for adaptability, resilience and/or the restoration of traditional food uses and production;

(e) Ability to exercise the right to self-determination and free, prior and informed consent and to defend food sovereignty and development.

IV. Land rights

19. Although ancestral rights to land are a cornerstone of the livelihoods of indigenous peoples, few countries have been ready to undertake to recognize them. Lack of political will together with obstacles such as lack of legal recognition of indigenous rights in national legal frameworks and tenure regimes, various forms of discrimination and inappropriate policies towards indigenous peoples are at the root of some of the limitations that are found with regard to the recognition of indigenous peoples' land rights.

Chile

20. FAO has been collaborating with the Government of Chile in the technical support of a Mapuche land demarcation project in the Araucanía region in the south of the country. The project is part of the Government's policy to address the issue of the restitution of indigenous peoples' land and water rights and to support the efficient and sustainable use of natural resource. The project is now in its second phase, which will address the testing and formulation of participative demarcation methodologies developed jointly with Mapuche communities, together with participatory exercises for the analysis and elaboration of territorial development strategies.

21. Together with the National Indigenous Development Corporation, FAO is funding the organization of a workshop for the strengthening of indigenous policies on land and water in Chile. The workshop will discuss lessons learned from other countries in the Latin American region, including Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru. It is expected that the workshop will produce a final document with suggestions for the strengthening of national policies on indigenous peoples. The proposals that emerge from the document will provide input for support and follow-up in the context of the United Nations inter-agency group. It is envisaged that the whole process will be linked to and benefit from the participation of the members of the Permanent Forum from the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Sub-Saharan Africa

22. In the context of the overall objective of assisting its member countries in setting up sustainable rural livelihoods and ensuring more equitable access to resources, since 2006, with donor funding from Norway, FAO has been undertaking a number of cross-departmental and cross-disciplinary activities for improving the tenure security of the rural poor in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result of violent conflict, increased competition, the degradation of natural resources, the negative demographic effect of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other factors, there is growing land tenure insecurity in the region, which leads in turn to increased vulnerability in terms of rural livelihoods, high levels of extreme poverty and hunger. With a view to addressing tenure insecurity, new policy initiatives throughout the region seek to secure customary land rights and institutions through the recognition of customary law, especially customary land rights, and their integration into the national land administration frameworks. Such policies seek to strengthen customary land tenure as a separate tenure category, with a commitment to provide for the progressive development of customary land law and for land management and administration.

23. The specific outputs of these FAO activities will enhance the knowledge base for the legal empowerment of the rural poor, using the law to help disadvantaged groups gain greater control over decisions and processes affecting their lives, in particular, over the natural resources on which they depend, and provide support for increasing the capacity of rural poor communities to legally secure land rights and for improving, awareness of and access to legal information, rural institutions and innovative, simplified formalization procedures for securing land tenure. The work involved has included case studies documenting good practices and lessons learned in sub-Saharan countries, including Angola, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as in Southern Sudan and countries in the Pacific region (Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu). It has included case studies that deal with indigenous peoples, including the San in Angola and the Maasai around Lake Victoria and Lake Naivasha.

Angola

24. In the context of the activities carried out by the land tenure service in Angola through various projects related to securing tenure rights and supporting local land administration, specific efforts have been made to protect the land rights of a San (Bushmen) community in the province of Huila, Angola. Historically, the Angolan San have lived in a situation of triple disadvantage in terms of social, demographic and economical discrimination. Their culture is still dealing with the consequences of invasion, dominance and the occupation of their land by Bantu in the pre-colonial era. They were discriminated against by the Portuguese colonizers, and in post-independence times have been excluded from development and killed. They were drawn into the military as highly qualified trackers and were killed in the war, but never had a chance to participate in a public, political or legislative capacity.

25. In this context, FAO, working in partnership with other actors, such as the national non-governmental organization OCADEC and the government of Huila Province, has supported the delimitation of the San community of Mupenbati in the municipality of Quipungo. This process started in 2005 and was finalized, with the

official delivery of the land title, in April 2007. Written documentation and a video are available on demand.

V. Rights of pastoral peoples

26. FAO supported a study of the complexities of land tenure and the struggle for pastoralist livelihoods in Kenya, using a participatory approach that gave a voice to and learned from the experiences of women and men from the Maasai, Samburu, Pokot and other communities. The study, entitled "We are the land, and the land is us: the complexities of land tenure and struggles for pastoralist livelihoods in Kenya", offers information on the realities of life for these communities, filling gaps in knowledge about several aspects of their struggle for survival. It also offers insight into various gender dimensions of pastoralist livelihoods. A major finding of the study is that pastoralists are in extreme difficulty as a result of global, national and regional economic and political policies and the lack of action to protect their fundamental human rights, including land rights. Marginalization, historical injustices, lack of land rights and limited access to critical resources make the struggles of pastoralists akin to the struggles of indigenous peoples across the globe. The case studies demonstrate that the statutory laws imposed, which are based on western definitions of individual tenure, tend to ignore customary laws pertaining to communal tenure and common property, with devastating consequences for pastoralists' livelihoods.

VI. Developments in animal genetic resources for food and agriculture

27. Under the auspices of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, FAO convened the International Technical Conference on Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, in Interlaken, Switzerland, from 3 to 7 September 2007. The Interlaken Conference adopted the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources and the Interlaken Declaration on Animal Genetic Resources. Containing 23 strategic priorities for action, the Global Plan of Action is the first ever internationally agreed framework to promote the sustainable use, development and conservation of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture.

28. The Global Plan of Action and the Interlaken Declaration both recognize the important roles of indigenous and local communities, including pastoralists, as custodians of animal genetic resources. The Interlaken Declaration affirms that such communities should participate in the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of animal genetic resources for food and agriculture and the desirability, as appropriate, subject to national legislation, of respecting, preserving and maintaining traditional knowledge relevant to animal breeding and production as a contribution to sustainable livelihoods, and the need for the participation of all stakeholders in making decisions, at the national level, on matters related to the sustainable use, development and conservation of animal genetic resources. Strategic priority 6; one of a number of clauses in the Global Plan of Action referring to indigenous issues, calls on countries and organizations to support indigenous and local production systems and associated knowledge systems of importance to the maintenance and sustainable use of animal genetic resources. It

also recognizes that livestock resources are integral components of the agricultural ecosystems, economies and cultures of indigenous communities.

29. The FAO Conference at its thirty-fourth session, held in November 2007, endorsed the outcomes of the Interlaken Conference and requested the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to report back to the FAO Conference in 2009 on steps taken to implement the Global Plan of Action.[6] The FAO Conference also recognized the important role of small-scale livestock keepers, particularly in developing countries, as custodians of most of the world's animal genetic resources for food and agriculture in the use, development and conservation of livestock resources. It specifically requested the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to address the issue in its report to the 2009 session of the FAO Conference.

Aims and strategies of the Global Plan of Action for Animal Genetic Resources

30. The Global Plan of Action calls for the recognition of indigenous peoples' contributions by making the following point within its aims and strategies:

> Pastoralists, farmers and breeders, individually and collectively, and indigenous and local communities, play a crucial role in *in situ* conservation and development of animal genetic resources. It is important to better understand and support their role in a context of rapid economic and social change, so that they can play an effective function in *in situ* management, and share fairly and equitably in the benefits arising from the utilization of these resources. A number of actors and stakeholders can assist livestock keepers and their communities in playing this role: researchers, extension agencies, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and local cooperatives.

VII. Rights of farmers under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

31. Negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture culminated in the adoption by the FAO Conference in November 2001 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (resolution 3/2001). Under article 9 of the International Treaty, the contracting parties recognize the enormous contribution that local and indigenous communities and farmers of all regions of the world, particularly those in the centres of origin and crop diversity, have made, and will continue to make, for the conservation and development of plant genetic resources which constitute the basis of food and agriculture production throughout the world. Farmers' rights include the protection of traditional knowledge and the right to participate equitably in benefit-sharing and in national decision-making about plant genetic resources. Under article 9, Governments have the responsibility for implementing those rights in accordance with their needs and priorities. Article 9 also provides that such rights are subject to national legislation.

[6] For information about the Interlaken Conference, including the Declaration and the Global Plan of Action, see http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/genetics/ITC_docs.html.

32. At its second session (29 October to 2 November 2007), the Governing Body of the International Treaty recalled the importance of fully implementing article 9 of the Treaty. While recognizing that, according to article 9, the responsibility for realizing farmers' rights, as they relate to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, rests with national Governments, the Governing Body also acknowledged that there is uncertainty in many countries as to how farmers' rights can be implemented and that the challenges related to the realization of such rights are likely to vary from country to country. The Governing Body encouraged the contracting parties and other relevant organizations to submit views and experiences on the implementation of farmers' rights as set out in article 9 of the Treaty, involving, as appropriate, farmers' organizations and other stakeholders, and requested its Secretary to collect these views and experiences as a basis for an agenda item for consideration by the Governing Body at its third session.

VIII. The right to food

33. Each year FAO celebrates World Food Day on 16 October, the day on which the organization was founded in 1945. The theme for World Food Day 2007 was "The right to food". The theme was chosen to highlight the increasing recognition of the important role of human rights in eradicating hunger and poverty and hastening and deepening the sustainable development process. A prominent part of the awareness-raising efforts during the event was dedicated to indigenous peoples' right to food. The activities included a presentation and a discussion panel dealing with indigenous peoples and the right to food.

34. Most of the world's hungry people belong to the marginalized sectors of society: poor subsistence farmers, fisherfolk, wood-dwellers in mountainous areas and other geographically, climatically and socially disadvantaged regions. Accordingly, the majority of the victims of hunger are members of ethnic or religious minorities, people discriminated against owing to their to tribal, social or ethnic origin. Rarely is any of these groups offered the opportunity to participate in political and economic decision-making. Advancing the human right to food can help shift the world's attention to the violations of the human rights of those marginalized sectors.

35. The Right to Food Guidelines established by the United Nations serve to empower the poorest and marginalized to have a voice in policy decisions affecting them and to claim their rights. Problems relating to the right to food are often rooted in law. Access to natural resources such as land or water is a case in point. Discrimination affects aid policies and distribution schemes. It occurs in the context of agrarian reform efforts, which frequently exclude indigenous people and/or minorities from land ownership. FAO actively works to raise awareness of the rights of indigenous peoples by referring to the Right to Food Guidelines and instruments of international human rights law.[7]

[7] For information about FAO activities relating to the right to food, see http://www.fao.org/righttofood/about_en.htm.

IX. Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems

36. In 2002, FAO initiated a programme on the conservation and adaptive management of Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems, aiming to establish a basis for the global recognition, conservation and sustainable management of such systems and their associated landscapes, biodiversity, knowledge systems and cultures.

37. During its preparatory phase (2002 to 2006), the programme initiative identified pilot sites in Algeria, Chile, China, Morocco, Peru, the Philippines and Tunisia. The pilot systems, which began in 2007, are now implementing dynamic conservation management approaches aimed at helping national and local stakeholders to protect and sustainably conserve the systems and their components.

38. In 2007, the initiative organized an international forum on conservation and sustainable management, during which the representative of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues made a presentation, emphasizing the importance of the systems for indigenous peoples. A presentation was also made at an event to mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous People organized by IFAD. Discussions were carried out with the Christensen Fund about future collaboration, in particular on issues related to intellectual property rights for indigenous knowledge and genetic resources for food and agriculture. Furthermore, the initiative was endorsed by the Global Environment Facility Council, and a project regarding indigenous people in China was formulated with funding from Spain in the context of the Millennium Development Goals.

X. Fisheries: indigenous languages and scientific education for indigenous peoples

39. FAO is frequently required to disseminate information in languages other than the official United Nations languages, and publishes manuals and other information in indigenous languages. One example is provided by its Fisheries Department, which recently published information on the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in several Pacific languages (Fijian, Kirbati, Motu, Gela, Tongan, Tuvaluan, Bislama, Samoan and Maori).[8]

40. In 2007, FAO began supporting a programme for regionally based marine education and training in the western and northern Pacific to foster understanding, the practical use of knowledge (including native Hawaiian, Alaskan native and other Pacific islander-based knowledge) and technical expertise relevant to the stewardship of living marine resources. The programme is currently carried out in cooperation with the Western Pacific and the North Pacific Regional Fishery Management Councils, regional educational institutions and local community training entities, establishing programmes or projects that will improve communication, education and training related to marine-resource issues throughout the region and increase scientific education for marine-related professions among coastal community residents, including indigenous Pacific islanders, native Hawaiians, Alaskan natives and other underrepresented groups in the region.

[8] See http://www.fao.org/fishery/ccrf/7.

XI. Summary of the contribution of FAO to an inter-agency paper on climate change and indigenous peoples

41. Because indigenous peoples are often overwhelmingly dependent on the environment for daily living, their communities are among those most adversely affected by climate changes. Furthermore, indigenous peoples count for a disproportionate number of the world's poor and food insecure. At the same time, they have demonstrated an impressive capacity to adapt to inhospitable environments and difficult circumstances. Many indigenous populations also possess a unique knowledge of plant genetic diversity, which may be needed to fight plant and animal diseases. Many also know how to breed varieties that can cope with stressed environments, or possess the ability to interpret natural phenomena so as to forecast weather shifts and respond appropriately.

42. Local knowledge and insight of this kind may provide the basis for developing alternative paradigms to counter the detrimental effects of climate change. As a supporting and cooperating agency, FAO plays a role in assisting member countries to identify potential adaptation options and to support local people in their search for viable alternatives applicable to their particular circumstances. The ultimate goal is not to enforce pre-selected practices or policies on collaborating communities, but rather to inform and promote local dialogue concerning the local impact of climate change and site-specific solutions for reducing vulnerability. Bridging the gap between scientific and traditional practice is fundamental for formulating successful measures to guarantee food security. It is therefore imperative for FAO to collaborate with indigenous peoples and their organizations in a joint effort to counteract climate change and achieve food security for all.